THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS) : (a) and (b) From time to time media reports regarding mines and minerals are brought to the notice of the Ministry of Mines, Government of India. Mineral Concessions are granted by State Governments as per provisions of Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 and Rules made thereunder for undertaking reconnaissance/prospecting/mining operations. As per Section 5(1) of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act., 1957, a mineral concession can be granted to an Indian national or a company as defined under Section 3 (1) of the Companies Act, 1956. Indian Subsidiaries of multinational companies like De Beers India Prospecting Private Limited, BHP Minerals India Private Limited, M/s ACC-Rio Tinto, M/s Phelps Dodge Exploration Private Limited and Anglo-American Exploration (India) Private Limited have been granted large area prospecting licences and reconnaissance permits for aerial survey of gold and associated minerals in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.

(c) As per Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM), a Subordinate Office of Ministry of Mines a total recoverable reserve of 19.750 million tonnes of gold ore (equivalent to 88.03 tonnes of gold metal) as on 1.4.2000 is available in India. Besides, Geological Survey of India (GSI), a Subordinate Office of Ministry of Mines has located 17 gold bearing prospects/deposits in Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, Rajasthan and Maharashtra.

(d) and (e) The National Mineral Policy, 1993 had recognized the importance of initiative and co-operation of the private sector in consolidating survey and exploration requirement of the country. Although India has got very long history and experience in gold mining, mining has been limited to relatively high-grade deposits of a minimum of 3 gms/tonne of primary gold. New gold dissolution methods, better media for solvent or resin extraction and new bacteriological techniques could improve production technology and utilization of lower grade sources.

Mine closure plan

4891. SHRI C.P. THIRUNAVUKKARASU : Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to empower village Panchayats to grant prospecting licences by amending mining regulations;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Committee has been set up to draw up Mine closure plan;
(d) if so, the recommendations of the Committee; and
(e) action proposed by Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS) : (a) and (b) Under the provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996, it is mandatory for the State Governments to obtain recommendations of the Gram Sabha or the Panchayats at the appropriate level before granting of prospecting licence or mining lease for minor minerals in the Scheduled Areas. Mineral Concession for minor minerals are granted by State Governments under their Minor Minerals Concession Rules. There is no proposal to amend Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 to empower village Panchayats to grant prospecting licences.

(c) to (e) Yes, Sir. The Government had set up a committee to look into various issues relating to mine closure. The recommendations of the Committee were considered in the conference of State Ministers of Mining and Geology held on 22.1.2003. Based on the decision taken in the conference, detailed provisions for mine closure plans including responsibilities of holder of mining lease and financial assurance have been made to provide for rehabilitation of mined out areas by amending the Mineral Concession Rules, 1960 and Mineral Conservation and Development Rules, 1988 *vide* Gazette notifications GSR 329(E) and GSR 330(E) respectively both dated 10.4.2003, copies of which are scheduled to be laid on the Table of the House on 7.5.2003.

Formulation scheme for non-conventional energy sources for Bihar

†4892. SHRIMATI KUM KUM RAI : Will the Minister of NON-CONVENTIONAL ENERGY SOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the State Government of Bihar has formulated any schemes of non-conventional energy sources such as solar energy, wind energy, bio-gas energy and bio-mass energy and sent to the Central Government;
(b) if so, the details of the action being taken by Government thereto; and
(c) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF NON-CONVENTIONAL ENERGY SOURCES (SHRI M. KANNAPPAN) : (a) to (c) The Ministry of Non-Conventional Energy Sources is implementing various non-conventional energy programmes/schemes based on non-conventional energy sources like solar, wind, biomass and small hydro throughout the country, including Bihar. Details of physical achievements made under the

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.